



PREPARING FOR A PANDEMIC:

What Parents Need to Know About Seasonal and Pandemic Flu



CALHOUN COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

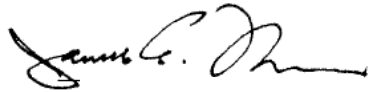
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A MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH OFFICER

An influenza, or flu, pandemic happens when a new flu virus appears that easily spreads from person-to-person and around the world. A pandemic flu would spread rapidly and affect all age groups. It would cause severe illness in a high proportion of those infected. The World Health Organization warns that a flu pandemic could infect between 25 and 30 percent of the world's population – three million people in the state of Michigan alone.

So what do you, as a parent, need to know about pandemic flu? It is important to know both the magnitude of how a pandemic outbreak may affect your day-to-day routine, and what actions you can take to help lessen the impact of an influenza pandemic on you and your family. Because a pandemic will happen almost everywhere at nearly the same time, few communities will have resources to spare. That is why it is so important for you to prepare your family for a pandemic event.

This guide will provide you with information about seasonal and pandemic flu, how to stop the spread of illness, and how to plan for a pandemic. By educating yourself and planning ahead, you can reduce the effects of a pandemic on your family...and our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James A. Rutherford".

James A. Rutherford, MPA
Health Officer
Calhoun County Public Health Department

SEASONAL FLU VS. PANDEMIC FLU: What's the Difference?

	Seasonal Flu	Pandemic Flu
Description	Seasonal flu is caused by influenza viruses that are similar to those already affecting people. Flu shots are available every year to protect against seasonal flu.	Pandemic flu (e.g., bird or swine flu) is caused by a new influenza virus that people have not previously been exposed to. Flu shots might not be available during the beginning of the pandemic because large amounts of vaccine cannot be made until experts know what the virus looks like.
Symptoms	Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle pain.	Symptoms will be similar to the regular flu, but may be more severe and complications could be more serious.
	<p>Healthy adults are usually not at risk for serious complications.</p> <p>The very young, the elderly, and people with serious health conditions are at increased risk for serious complications, such as pneumonia or even death.</p> <p>The more common flu that spreads each winter generally causes a modest impact on society, for example, some schools are closed and sick people are encouraged to stay home.</p>	<p>Healthy adults may face a higher risk for serious complications.</p> <p>It is not possible to prevent or stop a pandemic flu once it begins spreading. Infected people can spread the disease from one day prior to the onset of symptoms to about five days after onset. This makes it extremely easy for the virus to spread rapidly.</p> <p>A severe pandemic could change daily life for some time. People may choose to stay home or be forced to stay home if they are sick or need to care for others. Travel and public gatherings could be limited. Basic services and access to supplies could be disrupted.</p>



WHAT IS H1N1 (SWINE) FLU?

In April 2009, a new influenza virus causing illness in people worldwide was detected. In June 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a H1N1 pandemic flu was underway. Originally called “swine flu” because of the viruses normally found in pigs, H1N1 was found to have two genes from pigs, and bird (avian) and human genes.

BE A FLU FIGHTER!

A pandemic strain of the flu is spread just like seasonal flu – through droplets from coughs and sneezes. You can take common-sense steps now to limit the spread of flu. Here’s how.

- Teach your children to wash their hands often with lots of soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself. Alcohol-based cleaners are also effective.
- Teach your children to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, or by coughing into the inside of the elbow. Throw tissue away after use. Again, be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Keep children who are sick at home. Don’t send them to school, and keep them away from others until they are better.
- Keep all childhood vaccinations up-to-date, and make sure everyone in your household gets a flu shot each year. While the vaccine available for the ordinary flu will not protect you from a pandemic influenza virus, it will protect you from getting seasonal flu, which could weaken your immune system and your resistance to a pandemic influenza.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Do not share food or drinks, or eating utensils or cups.
- If you smoke – quit. Smokers are more likely to get seasonal flu, and children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to have weakened immune systems and greater susceptibility to illness.



SLOWING THE SPREAD OF A PANDEMIC

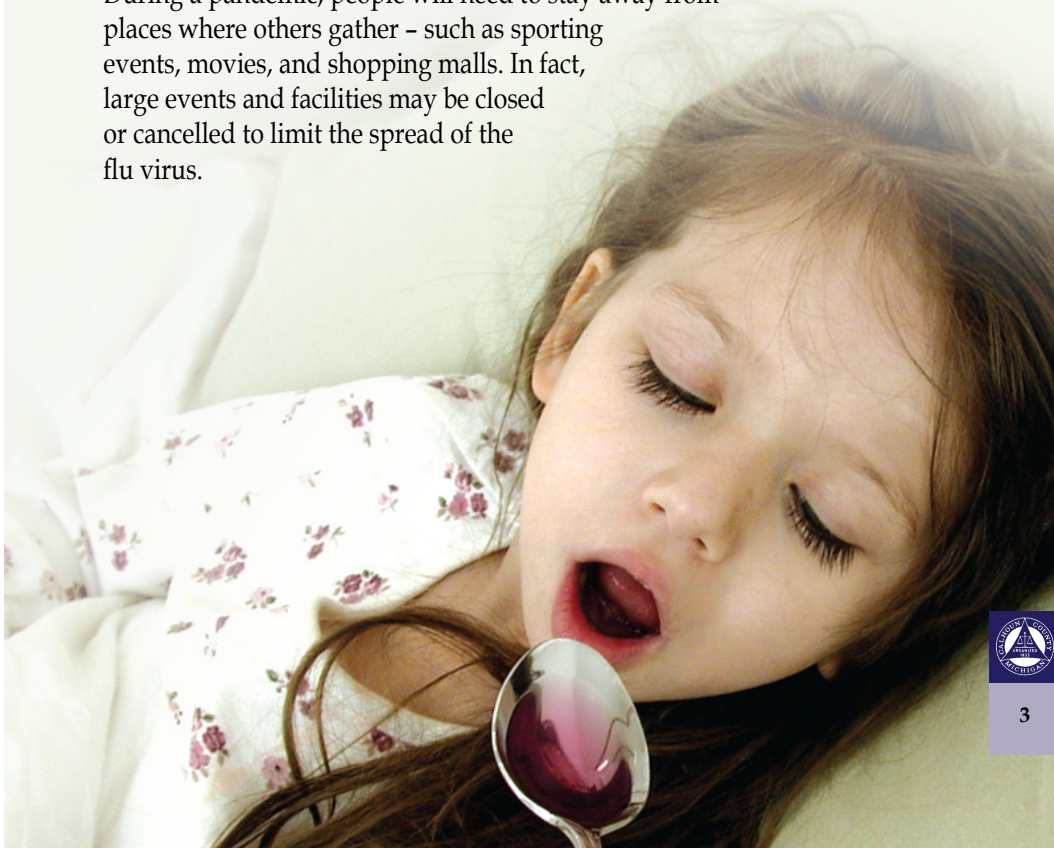
It is not possible to prevent or stop a pandemic flu once it begins to spread. Infected people can spread the disease from one day prior to the onset of symptoms, to about five to seven days after onset. This makes it extremely easy for the virus to spread rapidly. During a pandemic event, people may be asked or required to do things to help decrease the spread of the disease. Some examples include staying home and avoiding large groups.

STAY HOME

People who are sick should stay home. Children should not go to school if they are sick. Staying home will be especially important during a pandemic to limit the spread of the disease.

AVOID LARGE GROUPS

During a pandemic, people will need to stay away from places where others gather – such as sporting events, movies, and shopping malls. In fact, large events and facilities may be closed or cancelled to limit the spread of the flu virus.



PLANNING FOR SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Your child's school or childcare facility may be closed to limit the spread of pandemic flu. School closings may be a public health tool for containing disease early in a pandemic, and could occur on short notice. Take steps now to prepare for an extended home stay.

- Talk to teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations about your school's pandemic plan, and offer to help with planning efforts.
- Plan now in case children must stay at home for extended periods. School closings may accompany restrictions on public gatherings, including malls and movie theaters.
- Plan activities your children can do at home. Have learning materials, such as books, school supplies, and educational computer activities and movies on hand.



- Talk to teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations about possible activities, lesson plans, and exercises that children can do at home if schools are closed.
- Store a supply of water and food. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store – or stores may be out of supplies – so it will be important for you to have extra supplies on hand.
- Maintain a two-week supply of nonperishable food that doesn't need refrigeration, preparation (including the use of water), or cooking. Include formula, if you have an infant, and any other special nutritional needs.
- Store two weeks of water, one gallon of water per person per day (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation/sanitation), in plastic containers. Avoid containers that decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles.
- Have an extra supply of prescription drugs on hand for all family members. Make sure you also have a supply of nonprescription drugs and other health supplies, including pain relievers, stomach remedies, cough and cold medicines, fluids with electrolytes, and vitamins.



Isolation and quarantine are public health actions that are used to contain the spread of a contagious disease. If asked, it will be important for you to follow isolation and/or quarantine instructions.

ISOLATION

Isolation is for people who are already ill. When someone is isolated, they are separated from people who are healthy. Having the sick person isolated (separated from others) can help slow or stop the spread of the disease. People who are isolated can be cared for in their homes, in hospitals, or other healthcare facilities. Isolation is usually voluntary, but local, state, and federal governments have the power to require the isolation of sick people to protect the public.

QUARANTINE

Quarantine is for people who have been exposed to the disease but who are not sick. When someone is placed in quarantine, they are also separated from others. Even though the person is not sick at the moment, they were exposed to the disease and may still become infectious and then spread the disease to others. Quarantine can help to slow or stop this from happening. States generally have the power to enforce quarantines within their borders.



PLANNING FOR A PANDEMIC

As you and your family plan for a flu pandemic, think about the challenges you might face. The services you depend on may be disrupted. Here are some things to consider:

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include hospitals, clinics, banks, restaurants, government offices and post offices, and telephone and cell phone companies. Workplaces may be understaffed because workers are sick or absent.
- Gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship services, may be cancelled. Prepare contact lists such as telephone chains and email lists. Consider holding meetings by conference call.
- Consider that the ability to travel, even by car if there are fuel shortages, may be limited.
- Talk to your family about where family members will go in an emergency and how they will receive care in case you can't communicate with them.
- Widespread illness could result in the closing of ATMs and banks. Keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks in small denominations for easy use.





Is it the Flu?

The symptoms of influenza are:

- ☐ Fever – low (99 F) to high (104 F), usually for three days, but may persist for four to eight days. Sometimes fever will go away and return a day later.
- ☐ Aching muscles
- ☐ Cough
- ☐ Headache
- ☐ Joint aches
- ☐ Eye pain
- ☐ Feeling very cold or having shaking chills
- ☐ Feeling very tired
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Runny or stuffy nose
- ☐ Diarrhea and vomiting - while not standard flu symptoms, may occur in pandemic flu

IF YOUR CHILD DEVELOPS THESE SYMPTOMS...

- Keep them home from school!
- Encourage them to rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Give fever reducers (acetaminophen or ibuprofen). Do not use aspirin in children or teenagers as it can cause Reye's syndrome, a life-threatening illness.
- Contact your healthcare provider for further advice. **CALL VERSUS GOING TO THE OFFICE.**

When your child stays home sick, it is important to report the illness as accurately as possible to the school office. Calhoun County Public Health Department monitors school illness reports to watch for trends. During a flu pandemic, keeping track of these numbers will help health officials determine when and whether to close schools, whether the outbreak is increasing in scope, and whether to declare an epidemic.



SEEK MEDICAL CARE!

SERIOUS WARNING SIGNS THAT REQUIRE MEDICAL ATTENTION:

IN CHILDREN

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

IN ADULTS

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

OTHERS

- Persons with an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on pandemic flu, visit the following websites or call the telephone numbers provided.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

www.flu.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

1.800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

inquiry@cdc.gov/h1n1flu

Michigan Department of Community Health

www.michigan.gov/prepare

Calhoun County Public Health Department

190 E. Michigan Ave., Suite A100

Battle Creek, MI 49014

Phone: 269-969-6370

Fax: 269-966-1489

The Calhoun County Public Health Department has experts on staff who can answer your questions about pandemic flu and help you with your planning efforts. For more information, contact one of the individuals below.

James A. Rutherford, Health Officer

Phone: 269-969-6380

Email: jrutherford@calhouncountymi.gov

Joe Frost, Emergency Preparedness Educator

Phone: 269-969-6492

Email: jfrost@calhouncountymi.gov

Brigette Reichenbaugh, Public Information Officer

Phone: 269-969-6366

Email: breichenbaugh@calhouncountymi.gov

Calhoun County Public Health Department programs are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, or disability.

